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AN
ODE TO THE SUN
AND OTHER POEMS.

AN
ODE TO THE SUN
AND OTHER POEMS

BY
R. WARWICK BOND
AUTHOR OF "THE IMMORTALS AND OTHER POEMS"

LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., LTD.
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Shapleigh fund

TO
THOSE OF HIS CRITICS WHO READ, BEFORE CRITICIZING,
HIS LAST VOLUME ;
TO
THOSE TWELVE OR TWENTY MEMBERS OF A
GENEROUS PUBLIC WHO BOUGHT IT ;
LASTLY AND CHIEFLY TO
THOSE NUMEROUS WRITERS OF VERSE WHO, UNREAD AND
UNBOUGHT, STILL STRIVE TO GIVE HONEST ACCOUNT
OF THE SENSE OF BEAUTY AND THE PERCEPTION
OF TRUTH THAT IS IN THEM,
THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED
BY ONE
NOT THE LEAST "UNCOUTH, UNKIST" OF THEIR NUMBER.

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AN ODE TO THE SUN.

~~ETERNAL Light ! if sorrow-laden come~~

ERRATUM.

Page 100, first line of IX.—*for* "is bloom" *read* "is blown."

~~... have with a thousand years~~
forgot.

Even as hoar Ossian's Celtic harp did hail
Thy lamp that o'er his sightless eyeballs rolled—
Even as that other broke the stately tale,
Where Hell and hideous Chaos lay enscrolled,
To bless that Light he should no more behold—

B

AN ODE TO THE SUN.

ETERNAL Light ! if sorrow-laden song,
Catching a happier tinge this cloudless morn,
May quit this dark sphere of our mortal wrong
And teach its utterance in thy praise to burn,
To thee in hymn of gratitude I turn.
Hail ! Traveller, that through the abysses cold
Of Night's blind realm and infinite gulfs that blot
Thought with their horror, holdest, and wilt hold,
Thy dazzling path with feet that falter not
When these halt rhymes have lain a thousand years
forgot.

Even as hoar Ossian's Celtic harp did hail
Thy lamp that o'er his sightless eyeballs rolled—
Even as that other broke the stately tale,
Where Hell and hideous Chaos lay enscrolled,
To bless that Light he should no more behold—

B

I, too, last-born of all the hapless choir,
—No peer of these who hymned thee heretofore,
Yet one for whom God darkens not thy fire—
Salute thee ere I reach the silent door,
And pass like them to dust, and be a voice no more.

Hail ! thou that never without welcome art,
Bright Lord of human joy !—whether new-born,
And shaking Ocean from thee, to the heart
Of the dim city's slaves, by toil outworn,
Thou bring'st a thought that makes them less
forlorn,
And lightenest the sad features, pale and wan ;
—Or when the red hues of thy setting stain
Evening's cloud-hung pavilions, and man
Hears in that vision's solemn peace a strain
Wafted from Heaven itself, that stills Earth's clamor
ous pain.

What Paradise of joy thou need'st must be
Whose far-off bounty thus can gladden Earth !
Know not thy tribes a ceaseless revelry ?
Exult they not with an immortal mirth
Exceeding far our happiest moment's birth ?

Or do I dream, imagining, behind
Thy curtain of impenetrable flame,
Deep beatific regions, where no mind
Is pasture to remorse, where hate ne'er came,
Where trust begets no tears and loveliness no shame ?

Surely within that fiery husk there lies
Some happy sanctuary and inmost core
Of blessedness, deep-hidden from our eyes !
Say, were our spirits thy denizens of yore
That seek so fondly an ideal shore ?
Wert thou that country of our golden prime
And innocence dimly recollected yet ?
Whence, else, across our wilderness of Time
Gleams this sad beauty of a vague regret ?
Even as we gaze on thee are not our eyelids wet ?

Nay, 'tis a dream ! for art thou not in truth
A toiler, worn and tortured even as we ?
One vast convulsive strife, whose giant youth,
Afflict with thousand pangs we cannot see,
Sustains the awful burden silently :

Charged it may be with a Divine behest
To shame man's puny wrath and coward whine,
That with a Titan's travail at thy breast
Can'st with an all unlesened grandeur shine,—
Can'st hold thine anguished race, suffer and make no
sign.

What does man owe thee not? his very breath
Attends thy charity for food, warmth, air :
And at thy pleasure swoops the unswerving death
Annihilating who but now was here !
How can he but admire thee, how not fear,
Whose smile sustains, whose wrath his being stills?
And if his ignorance, abashed and cowed,
Reared to thy beam upon unnumbered hills
His altars, and with sacrificial cloud
Veiled thy resplendent face, what wonder that he
bowed?

What wonder if the chainless soul of Greece
To thee her manifold libation spills?
—Lord of her olive's, of her vine's, increase !
Unerring Archer ! roving Lycian hills ;
Fathomless Seer ! whose inspiration fills

Thy priestess with the rage of hidden things ;
Or Harpist ! wreathed with the unwithering bays !
—Greece, whose warm page, whose whole existence,
rings

With still redoubled pæans in thy praise,
The theme alike and source of those her deathless
lays !

Ne'er, since thine earliest shafts through Chaos
flew,

Order's bright couriers !—since thy glowing ball
Sucked the wide face of Deluge, till there grew
An Earth for thee to fertilize, and all

The abhorred monsters that kept carnival,
Gorging dead nations, felt the lessening deep,
Gave o'er the accursed feast and 'neath God's ban
Sank heavily to a perpetual sleep ;

What time thy smiling bow's translucent span,
Girdling the glistening world, proclaimed fresh hope
to man—

Ne'er, since that season, was thine influence
Unfelt, nor thou indifferent to man's weal :
Who mocked by Nile the Pharaoh's impotence,
Who stayed in mid career thy smoking wheel
Obedient to a warrior-chief's appeal,

Or graced a monarch's piety ; whose frown
Parted contending hosts, or in the sky
When outraged Freedom struck her conqueror down,
Symbolled his dire eclipse, or shudd'ringly
Owned it too dreadful task to light thy Maker die !

Wide o'er the world, thick through the months, are
spread

The tokens of thy bounty—not more dear
In Autumn, when Earth's mellowest fruits are shed,
Nor when the rose faints 'neath the sultry year,
Than when through cloak of mists the low rays
peer,

Or through March woodlands runs the whisper—
“ Spring ! ”

Welcomed not less within the Ring of Ice
Than by dusk millions of the Belt, that fling
On kneeling behemoth Java's woods of spice,
Or deepen Congo's shades with hateful sacrifice.

And if man's voice were silent, could'st thou lack
Thy meed of homage?—from the swinging tide,
From huge Brazilian forest-growths that crack
The crust which bears them, mountains down
whose side

The snow-field slips in thunder, or the pride

Of vassals whose procession throngs thy hall ?
Nay, art thou not their Sire, from whose embrace
But yesterday they parted—at whose call
They follow, follow, through the fields of Space,
Swept ceaselessly along in one triumphant race ?

Heirs are they all of untold wealth from thee :
But, oh ! thou grand Beneficence—thou sign
Of love and knowledge, strength and purity,
And all our dim guess hazards as Divine !—
Were but the grace thou granted'st Phaeton mine—
Could mortal frailty thee so importune,
And wrest that privilege of thy single day's
Full exercise of blessing, 'twere a boon
Above the brightest Wanderer that sways
Obedient to thy glance—worth all that glance surveys.

Thou miracle of beauty ! whose untamed
Effulgence is an irrepressible voice
Hymning thy Maker's glory—I am shamed !
No more shall murmuring lays, my recreant choice,
Jar with that music : rather I rejoice

In Man, my fellow ; figuring thy Light
The emblem of his spirit,—swift, joyous, free,
Rich lord of Time's long tribute,—that with might
Which may not be resisted moves, like thee,
To some far glorious goal and unseen destiny !

THE STOWAWAY.

AN INCIDENT OF THE GREAT STORM OF OCTOBER,
1882.

THE anchor swung ; the bar was past :
Each clinging fond adieu
Was half forgot, as free and fast
Before the breeze she flew.

Creaked her taut cordage up aloft ;
Rumbled her freight in hold :
There was no space for musings soft
In those glad hearts and bold.

She passed Dee's magic-haunted sands ;
She passed the Head of Orme,
Whose lonely mountain-outpost stands
To front the northern storm.

Away and away ! with hissing sound
She clove the tossing brine,
For lands of cloudless summer bound
Far South, beyond the Line.

There was a trouble in the West
Whenas the sun went down :
His light, that tipped each heaving crest,
Shone, balefully and brown.

He glared beneath a pile of cloud,
Whose ramparts huge and high
Loomed, like some giant's fastness proud
Built up into the sky.

The skipper eyed the lowering wrack—
—A tough old salt was he ;
And more, I ween, of grey than black
In 's hair and beard might be—

He eyed the wrack, he eyed the glow
Of level angry light ;
And muttered with a gloomy brow,
“ 'Twill be a gale to-night ! ”

The darkness settled on the sea :
Slower the vessel sped ;
'Twas night ere shone upon her lea
The lights of Holyhead.

The breeze had dropped to faintest sigh :
Aloft the helmsman heard
The slackened sails flap drearily,
Scarce by its motion stirred.

'Twas pitchy dark ! he might not trace,
For ten feet up, the mast ;
And for his wheel with hand must feel,
As slow the minutes passed.

Sudden, a dreary sound uprose
And deepened through the West :
—That sound the frightened seamew knows,
And seeks her cliff-built nest :

—That sound the careful farmer hears
In the late August heat,
And trembles for the weighted ears
That bow his ripened wheat :

A courier sweep of quivering breath,
That tells the liquid plain,
In whisper eloquent of death,
The coming hurricane.

A moment more, it smote the ship—
On her beam-ends she lay !
It lashed the water like a whip,
And tore it into spray :

It heaved the billows mountain-high,
And hounded them to shore ;
It made the flying foam a sky
Where none was seen before.

With rudder gone, and broken mast
She pitches helplessly,
The plaything of the angry blast,
The plaything of the sea.

A leak ! a leak ! she fills apace !
In pours the rushing flood !
“ Now Christ receive us of His grace,
And to our sins be good ! ”

Heaved on the summit of a wave
They spied a light on shore :
But slender hope its glimmering gave ;
'Twas three miles off or more.

“ All hands to lower away the boats ! ”
The skipper gives the word :
But one is staved before she floats,
And one goes by the board.

And one is launched and cut adrift,
And on the boiling tossed :
God grant the cockle-shell make shift
To reach the far-off coast !

“ Put back ! the skipper's left behind ! ”
The billows heard that cry, “
And swept her down the rushing wind,
That screamed in mockery.

The skipper stands upon the deck,
A life-belt in his hand ;
And measures from the sinking wreck
The distance to the land.

'Tis full three miles to yonder light ;
But he is strong of limb,
And fears not much those breakers' might,
The life-belt under him.

But ere he faced that angry flood,
O'er his old ship he cast,
Fore and abaft, one glance : it showed
A sight that held him fast !

There, striving with clasped hands to hide
The terror of the sea,
Against the broken bulwark's side
A lad cowered helplessly.

'Twas one of the great city's strays,
Nursling of want and cold,
That trusting chance to mend his days
Had crept into the hold :

And hidden there long time had lain
Until she sailed from port,
Willing his scanty crust to gain
In any toilsome sort.

And, sooth ! rough sailors are not kind
To land-rats such as these :
'Mid cuffs and kicks and stripes they find
A hard life on the seas.

The water pouring in amain
Had driven him up the stair :
But hope was none—the boat was gone :
He needs must perish there !

The skipper lingered, belt in hand
—The ship 'gan settle down—
Right well he knew 'twould not bear two ;
The lad must swim or drown.

The skipper lingered on the wreck,
Eyeing that shrinking form ;
Yet 'twas not boy, nor streaming deck
He saw, nor heard the storm.

Him seemed he saw another sight,
And heard another sound
—A little room, a fireside bright,
And youngsters gathered round.

Him seemed he saw their mother there :

She called them to her knee,
And led the pattering voices' prayer
—" Keep father safe at sea ! "—

Ah ! precious is the breath of life !
Though barren Fortune bring
But weary days, and thankless strife,
And little comforting ;

Yet men will hug their wretchedness,
Whatever lot she give ;
And life no rays of sunshine bless
Will still seem sweet to live.

But they who front what shocks may come
Until she speak them fair ;
Who fence a happy love with home,
And rear its pledges there ;

Who bear all toils, all risks contemn,
Tempering life's rude breath
To these, their darling ones—for them
A bitter thing is death !

* * * *

The morning broke ; the sky was clear ;
The storm was overblown :
But with its witness far and near
The rocky beach was strown.

Still heaved the mighty hills of sea,
Scarce half their fury spent ;
As by the margin, silently,
A troop of seamen went.

Saved by a miracle were they,
Whose boat had made the land
Scatheless 'mid last night's rage, and lay
Beached high upon the strand.

Something they sought, yet feared to find :
Unwitting, 'mid the dark,
Their captain had they left behind
Upon a sinking bark.

Long time, but all in vain, they sought
What sand or rock might hide ;
And scanned the freight of wreckage brought
By the inflowing tide.

c

Wave after wave upon the shore
Plunged sullenly and grand ;
And plank and rope and spar they bore
And rolled them on the sand.

But though from earliest light of morn
They watched the great waves come,
No answer to their feet was borne
Amid the rushing foam.

And when the flood had spent its power,
And back to ocean drew,
They searched afresh ; but hour by hour
The mute conviction grew.

—Nay, why should men, who hold life's breath
At such a troublous fee,
Deem so ungratefully of death,
That sets the toiler free ?

Is his repose a whit less sweet,
In fullest manhood ta'en,
Than if, his tale of years complete,
An ague stilled his pain ?

May not a brave man rest as well
In ocean-depths profound,
As laid with prayer and tolling bell
In quiet church-yard ground ?

No stone is his ; no kinsmen weep ;
No flower-encircled sod
Tells how we loved—but does he sleep
Less in the hand of God ?

“ Mourn not thy friend ; he is in bliss,
He parted gloriously : ”
Nay, we are foolish men in this,
And weep we know not why.—

—Still hour by hour through cove and bay
They searched the lonely shore :
The tide came back at close of day,
But no fresh burthen bore.

Only, at last, some seaweed near,
A little lad they spied :
The sand was in his draggled hair
His eyes were staring wide :

THE STOWAWAY.

Those eyes saw naught—their light was fled !
But round about his waist
With wondrous care, the sailors said,
There was a life-belt braced.

They knew him not ; and whom they sought
Found not:—the wild sea's breast
Hath caves of sleep serene and deep
For many a brave man's rest.

We are not now in act or thought
The strength we were of yore ;
We shrink from deeds our fathers wrought,
And toils our fathers bore :

Something we lack of fire and might,
And the old peerless fame :
Our arm is not so long in fight,
So terrible our name.

Yet can we never quite forget !
Some fair heroic deed
Keeps the roll bright, and speaks us yet
The Sea-Kings' sailor-seed.

We are not lost, whate'er befall—
A mighty people we !
While death like this, with trumpet-call,
Rings landwards from the sea.

ASTRÆA REDUX.¹

ADOWN the walk,
The garden all a glisten 'twixt two showers,
She passed, and left commotion 'mongst the flowers,
Shook the tall arum's stalk
With envy ; blushed the rose more crimson yet,
Sighing, " Farewell, my reign ! " ; the violet
Drooped lower her sweet head—
" My crown of modesty must wither now," she said.

In the far prime
Bright rose from eastern foam the Cyprian Queen,
And men fell down in worship ; nor had been
In the long tract of time
Peer to that splendour : Greece reputed wise,
And revered, Pallas of the owl-dark eyes :

¹ Reprinted, by kind permission, from *Murray's Magazine*.

But when this wonder came,
Old-vaunted worth grew poor, past loveliness a name.

Would'st learn what dark
Threatens, what unimagined blackness' reign !
Should the Immortals' envy snatch again
Their, and Earth's, darling ? Mark
How, when some flying star with trailing hair
Has quenched its burning path in turbid air,
Only by Night o'ercast
The amazed heavens can guess what untold splendour
passed.

Ask not her name :
The light winds whisper it on every hand ;
The river rustling where, by sedgy strand,
Lily and iris flame,
Murmurs no other ; save of her is heard
No utterance in earth ; and the glad bird
Of morning, that on high
Triumphant mounts and sings, proclaims her through
the sky.

Were there no tongue
But mine to syllable her beauty's praise,
My voice should weary heaven and earth with lays ;
 Methinks 'twould not be long
Ere to each waste and pathless crag were known
That preciousness ! but now my songs are grown
 Needless importunate things,
And slander of desert wherewith a whole world rings.

AN OLD AIR.

SOFTLY she played, a well-remembered air,
And wedded to the strain rich notes of song,
Ling'ring as though she loved it—an old thing
And sweet, that song in Verdi's opera
The gipsy, Azucena, sings in prison,
“Ai nostri monti,”—out of fashion now.
And as I listened, o'er the first distaste
Of one who better loved the loftier lyres,
Schubert and Chopin and the master-mage
Beethoven, and tired of the Italian,
Its sugared cadence and bold recitative,
Triumphed ere long the memories which twined
About that melody, and touched my heart
With passion of regret—a nameless woe
That bared a desolation in my life ;
Tender and sweet withal, not far from tears.

Long after the rich notes had died away
Still with unwonted gentleness I spoke,
Moved, thought, as though a presence lingered yet
That by least inadvertence might be scared.
For in those tender tones meseemed I heard
The Spirit of childhood speaking ; or a voice
From Nature's self, my mistress of old time,
Chiding my long estrangement, and unkind
Forgetfulness of things I once held dear.

“ Where art thou wandering, comrade of old days ?
 Beneath what alien sky ?
Long have I called thee through the forest-ways
 Where, in a time gone by,
 We passed the sunny hours
 With laughter crowned and flowers :
 But from those silent bowers
 Comes no reply.

“ Hadst thou one thought my bosom did not mate ?
 Wast thou not wholly blest ?
And could'st thou leave thy fere disconsolate ?
 Ah ! change too surely guessed

When o'er our bliss one morn
The world's loud echoes borne
Taught thee untimely scorn
Of joys possessed !

“ Say, has that fickle queen thou wooed'st as bride
Consenting made thee glad ?
Say, can Success bestow, for all her pride,
More happy hours than sad ?
Commands her gorgeous seat
A vision more complete ?
And are thy joys so sweet
As those we had ?

“ Nay, rather thou art following a drear road
With thousand perils rife :
Nay, rather art thou battling with a flood
Of trouble, for dear life !
Hear'st not the billows roar ?
Back ! to the quiet shore :
Tempt that wild sea no more :
Hopeless the strife !

“ Hark ! how the gladsome spirits of wood and fell
 Call thee again to roam,
Pluck garlands, follow, up the narrowing dell,
 The torrent to its home.
 What though thou need'st must be
 Changed—yet we will not see,
 Worn—but we'll comfort thee :
 Wilt thou not come ?

“ Surely some envious cloud has intervened—
 Surely thou hast forgot
What happy ignorance, like a haven, screened
 Life from importunate thought ;
 What innocent mirth could thrill
 With rapture vale and hill :
 Dost thou remember still,
 And comest not ?

“ Ah ! there are steps thou never can'st retrace.
 Earth has too plainly set
Her livery on thee—visibly thy face
 Speaks her dull amulet.

Hers art thou, and must live
Chasing her fugitive
Marsh-gleams ; but thou may'st give
Remembrance yet."

Such was the music's message to my heart,
Sweet with the breath of childish memories :
Yet words leave music ever half untold
Except perchance by images, as thus :—
For I remember how, years afterwards,
After long toiling up the slippery slopes
Of mountain-wall that look towards Italy,
We reached at length the Weissthor's crown, and
stood
High over Macūgnaga, swathed in cloud ;
When, clutching at my arm, the guide cried, " Look !"
And pointed downwards. There, right underneath,
—So close, it seemed that, had we cast a stone
Straight from us, 'twould have fallen five thousand
feet
Sheer through mid air, and touched not rock or
snow—
Lay the green valley we had left ere dawn,
Lit with a burst of sun : the sward, the pines,
The houses, the great boulders—pebbles now,

The torrent from the glacier, flashing down ;
All these, cloud-framed, in brightest miniature !
Though I had roamed the valley many days,
I had not dreamed—until I saw it thus
After long effort, high in freezing air,
Shown brief through momentary rift of cloud—
I had not dreamed it was so beautiful.
Speechless, entranced, I gazed—and could have
 gazed !
Another moment—all was hurrying mist,
And the shrewd air forced us renew our toil :
But never will that picture from my mind,
—The valley as it lay far off, in sun,
So green, so happy, so divinely fair.

CINDERELLA AT HOME.¹

OF Cinderella it has been
Reported, heretofore,
That she became a Prince's queen,
And polished grates no more.
Purely fictitious this, I trow !
Think ! tedious drawing-rooms, dinners slow
The girl's good sense decided—" No,
"Twould be too great a bore !"

Not she !—but lounging once, I'm told,
As usual by the fire,
" Dear Godmother," she said, " you're old :
Take my advice ; retire !"—

¹ So did run the heading of sundry poetical invitations to Fancy-dress Balls given—Eheu ! fugaces—by a jovial bachelor in the north of England.

This poem is reprinted, by kind permission, from *Tinsley's Magazine*.

She did. Her powers aside were laid
In favour of that thoughtful maid,
Who carries on the fairy-trade,
Since then, in Lancashire.

Not as *old* maid, I'd have you know :
She likes champagne, not tea ;
And does the light fantastic toe
With any youthful she—
A taste that prompts her oftentime
To ask her friends, in dainty rhyme,
To come and dance till midnight's chime,
And let their troubles be.

And skilled in clothes-philosophy,
(She knows her "Sartor" well !)
Remembering, too, what witchery
Once made the drudge a belle,
So works, that all who enter there
Are clad no more in common wear,
Transformed to something rich and rare
Beneath her potent spell !

See ! once again she waves her wand,
 That wand of magic power !
Again she fills her bounteous hand
 With store of gifts to shower.
Once more she bids lay self aside,
Banish our sorrows, sink our pride,
Forget what budding hopes have died
 Or what may come to flower.

The charm is wov'n, the spell is fast !
 Behold ! what gallant show
Of knights and ladies from the Past
 In at her portals flow !
No rust of sleep upon them lies ;
Bright as of yore, fair, brave or wise,
They come—yet 'neath each quaint disguise
 Laughs out some face we know.

Raleigh has left his pirate-tricks
 Out on the Spanish Main ;
Guy Fawkes is interested to fix
 Up quite another train :

D

Sweet Marie-Antoinette from France
Greets Saladin (without his lance ;
He's tired of tilting—means to dance),
And Portia pleads again.

Hamlet, with whom Minerva flirts,
Looks quite an altered man ;
Rizzio's recovered from his hurts
Since that last waltz began :
Stalks in top-boots the King of Cats ;
From Wonderland the Man of Hats
Strolls in ; and Lady Teazle pats
A Templar with her fan.

Yon Carmelite finds dancing hot !
Othello looks as sour
As ever—(Mrs. O. has not
Been seen this last half-hour !)
A nice edition of Bo-Peep
Postpones her fruitless search for sheep ;
No doubt that irksome duty 'll keep,
—At least, so says the Giaour.

Châssez's a Greek in tunic's fold
To velvet matador ;
The Zingara in red and gold
With Paddy takes the floor :
—A medley strange ! worth, beauty, crime,
Of every age, from every clime,
They mingle modes of modern time
With old romantic lore.

Sing we the gracious Fairy's praise
Who summons up the throng :
May she who lightens our dull days
Her own glad life prolong !
Cindrella ! keep thy mien as bright,
Thy heart as young, thy step as light !
And invitations still indite
In not less graceful song.

VÆ VICTIS !

A LAMENT OVER THE THREATENED DECAY OF CLASSICAL STUDIES.

"Debemur morti nos nostraque."

Was it not true,
That mournful presage of an old-world rhyme?
Fails not the fount from which our fathers drew
Choked in the sands of Time?
Is not our sacrifice, our service, vain?
Kneel we not, idle priests, at a dishonoured fane?

Men crowd no more
The silent temples of a faith gone out :
Even o'er ourselves, who haunt the ancient door,
Creeps a dull pain of doubt.
Mounts the old fire indeed?—We are deceived !
Then burst the effulgent deity, when men believed.

The gods are dead !
 The wind sweeps idly through the Delphic shrine ;
 Parnassus thrills not to Apollo's tread ;
 His glens forget the Nine ;
 No more on Cynthus the white Huntress gleams,
 Nor Evius leads the rout by Dirce's tumbling streams.

No more are seen
 Bright Oreads bounding o'er the mountain-lawn ;
 No more the woodsman from his covert green
 Startles the dusky Faun ;
 No more across the purple sunlit wave
 The airy music floats from Triton's ocean-cave.

With wail of pain
 And roar of labour the whole Earth is filled,
 Echoing as one huge anvil, till all strain
 Of gentler sound is stilled :
 The Titan brood has burst its prison and dares
 Assail the immortal seats, but Jove no longer cares !

Vainly we call
 Our ancient aids to stem the advancing tide :
 A scanty host, we man the weakened wall
 And glance from side to side,

Where sink our chosen champions one by one,
Leaving our darkened hearts to wish we, too, were
gone.

But now there passed
He whose pre-eminence we least may spare : '
With armour buckled stoutly to the last
He smiled away despair,
And from the kingly calm of his own breast
Bade us in our weak selves discover strength un-
guessed.

But he, too, fell :
And, since, with faltering heart and nerveless arm
We fight, and miss the magic of his spell,
The wonderment, the charm :
Soon, each to his own ways, we separate,
And yield the useless battle 'gainst remorseless Fate.

¹ Matthew Arnold ; ob. April 15th, 1888, æt. su. 66.

“ Scilicet omne sacrum mors importuna profanat :
Omnibus obscuras injicit illa manus.

Quid pater Ismario, quid mater profuit, Orpheo ?
Carminē quid victas obstupuisse feras ? ”

O ye, who hold
For vanity the faith ye overthrow,
What help for struggle hath your teaching cold?
What anodyne for woe?
What call to mark where loftier spirits have trod,
And follow the steep path that puts not Gain for God?

Ye dull the brain
With endless sequence that forgets the Cause:
Ye shackle the free spirit with the chain
Of hard, material laws :
And with the Visible's blind pitiless light,
Would scorch all dews of Hope, and parch the springs
of Right.

Not yours to guess
What rich content from meditation springs,
What heritage of tranquil happiness
The reverent spirit brings
From wandering amid fair heroic days,
Court of the dim rich Past, and antique moss-grown
ways.

When all is done—
When traffic chokes in ocean, earth and air,
When tireless Science round the globe hath spun
Her webs of throbbing care,—
Will not men loathe a life of beauty void,
And passionate ask again the comfort ye destroyed?

When Fancy's dead,
And gentle Poesy now no harvest hath,
Will they not yearn for her old radiance shed
Across life's barren path;
And linger listening on a silent shore
For happy sea-born melodies that come no more?

Oh! for that day,
Fraught with forgotten splendours of the prime,
When, while uneasy sleep on Europe lay,
Burst from the depths of Time
A clarion voice!—the slumbering West awoke,
And glorious through her troubled dream the morning
broke.

With dazzled eyes
 She hailed its light—she grasped the wondrous
 page ;
 She drank the Chian wine ; she scaled the skies
 With the Athenian sage ;
 She caught the trumpet-blast of god-like powers
 Blown from the Ægean's rocks and seven-hilled City's
 towers.

She felt once more
 The inalienable dignity of Man,
 Tracking the Punic tale—to Latium's shore
 Following the Mantuan :
 She hurled her challenge in the teeth of Fate ;
 She shook her from despair and smiled to know her
 great.

She swept the main,
 She ranged the world, for trophies of high deed :
 She burst the fetters of the Papal chain ;
 —Skywards, on pinion freed,
 Soared Thought, till heart grew faint and eye-
 sight dim,
 Listening the ascending pulse of Shakspeare's sphere-
 toned hymn.

Ah ! long ago
That glory sank beyond the western steep :
Fast, comes the night ! but yet some after-glow
The lonely uplands keep ;
A roseate flush still lingers in the skies,
And echoes faint are heard of vanished harmonies.

We watch it fade,
That heavenly light ! we hear those voices die !
Mutely we sit, with folded hands, betrayed
To idle phantasy:
We hear but discord in the world's new song ;
We cannot share its feast, nor join its hurrying throng:

Like an old hound
That patient waits in his dead master's hall ;
And strains his ear for the loved footstep's sound,
The old familiar call ;
And, brooding o'er a dear face unforgot,
Turns from the strange caress, the hand that comforts
not.

“MY HOST.”

“Tantine injuria cœnæ?”

Juv. Sat. v. 9.

Not he who, civil in his own despite,
Bestows a pains
Betraying much indifference to the wight
He entertains :—

Not he in whom the patron's potency
Peeps through the host,
Who tempers warmth with self-complacency
Till welcome's lost :

Nor who, preoccupied with cares of pelf
And sordid fear,
Looks rather to be entertained himself
Than make me cheer :

Nor who more wearies appetite than whets,
 Heaping each kind
Of fish, flesh, fowl, the choicest—but forgets
 The sauce of mind :

Nor he whose wit's mere noise, whose boorish jest
 O'ersteps the line,
And due remembrance of himself and guest
 Confounds in wine :

I'll feast with none of these—fop, lordling, churl,
 Cræsus or clown ;
Poor is their banquet, though they dine off pearl,
 And couch on down.

Give me the host whose handshake doth announce
 A genuine pleasure ;
Who, though he weigh not welcome by the ounce,
 Does all with measure :

Whose amphora may boast an older cork,
 Since passed with wit ;
Whose *menu* shares its triumphs with the talk
 That seasons it :

Whose chat seems most such subjects to desire
 As interest me ;
Skilful to sympathize, yet ne'er enquire
 Too curiously :

Who spares not his own theories to impart
 In free debate,
Nor shames to clothe in language of the heart
 Each theme of weight :

Who, though his judgment be no passing whim,
 Considers mine ;
And carries all things courteously—with him
 I like to dine.

A CHRISTMAS EVE.

"THE snow falls thick on moor and fell,
The sheep lie close in fold :
Open the door ! a traveller poor
Craves shelter from the cold."

An agèd carle the goodman was ;
The course of fourscore years
Upon his face had writ their trace
Of want and toil and tears.

Feebly he op'd the gusty door—
"Small cheer is mine," quoth he,
"Yet shalt thou bide this Christmastide
And share my crust with me."

That traveller was spectre-pale,
His robe was worn and sere ;
So gaunt his look, the shepherd shook
With thrill of sudden fear.

Silent he entered, silent ate
The goodman's frugal store ;
Poor cates, I ween, as e'er were seen
To set a guest before !

" Now tell me true "—at length he spake,
And, sooth, his voice was kind,
But thin and clear it smote the ear
Like bells upon the wind—

" Now tell me true, why dost thou dwell
Alone these hills upon ?
Hast thou no friend thine age to tend ?
What mak'st thou here alone ? "

" Nigh sixty years in sun and storm,
Upon these mountains drear,
By stream and rock I keep the flock :
I have no home but here.

My wife and bairns are dead and gone
A weary while ago,
Laid one by one 'neath yon hearth-stone :
No other friend I know.

Methinks I see them in the mist
And hear them on the wind ;
From scaur and scree they beckon me,
But yet I bide behind."

The stranger answered never a word,
Fearsome he sat and grim :—
—What ails the wight that all his sight
Gins waver and grow dim ?

The stranger stretched a bony hand—
"Across the moor I fare ;
I may not stay till break of day,
Nor tax thy kindly care.

I may not pay thy charity
As other traveller pays,
Yet will I send a gift shall mend
Thy cheerless lonely days.

Farewell, brave heart !"—his hand he took
Full in his face he gazed :
An iron grasp ! an icy clasp !
A stony eye and glazed !

Even while he quailed his guest seems gone
 Into the wintry storm ;
But in no wise the old man's eyes
 Could track his parting form.

No figure broke the field of white,
 All lonely stretched the moor ;
The drifted snow no trace did show
 Of footsteps from the door.

He turned him in ; he laid him down
 Upon his couch of fern ;
He slept. The blast went sweeping past ;
 Loud roared the mountain-burn :

He heard them not :—surely he dreamed,
 For in his sleep he smiled,
Like wave-tossed men who clasp again,
 Unhoped, their wife and child.

Soundly he slumbered ! never more
 He drave his flock from fold :
The stranger guest his host had blessed
 With better gift than gold.

E

LIMITATION.

“ Consider the lilies.”

WHY on this splendid morn
Of May, when Earth new-born
Laughs, girl-like, in the thought that she is fair,
Can hearts that would be glad
Catch a suggestion sad,
And feel Spring's very rapture their despair?

Hyacinth, anemone,
Trust themselves forth ; the bee
Hums where the gorse has lit the waste with gold ;
Swift through the woodlands sent
The infectious merriment
Breaks in one frolic of green—yet we are cold !

¹ Reprinted, by kind permission, from *Temple Bar*.

Cold—nay ! yet this our joy
 Confesses the alloy
 Of words whose weakness wrongs the o'erflowing
 sense :

While, hark ! what mad delight
 Throbs from each feathered mite !
 Voice limits not their ecstasy intense.

We summon to our aid
 Music, delightful Maid !
 Store of sweet birdlike melodies has she :
 Again and yet again
 We trace the favourite strain,—
 A something is not there, and shall not be.

So, in the painter's eye
 Sweeps past triumphantly
 The pomp of Summer—Autumn sunsets stain
 The Evening's cloudy tent
 With dyes magnificent :
 He feels, but labours after them in vain.

Ah ! Nature knows a song
 Uttered without a tongue,

An eloquent magic she was never told :
The landscape hath a hue
Art will admire, pursue,
Hint, herald, almost capture—yet withhold.

Nature, divinely wise,
Weaves into harmonies
Her untold infinite wealth of tint and tone ;
In her most social mood
She kens a solitude,
And issues from her myriad birththroes, one.

But Man, self-conscious Man,
Agonize as he can,
Leaves his creation marred by many a blot ;
And, spite of utmost thrift,
Offers the heart no gift
Like hers, who scatters and considers not.

What music is in him
That with bleared eyes and dim
Gropes in some dust-heap till his days be spent ?
Who loves not his own kind,
How shall his utterance find
Accord with the vast universe' consent ?

Hence if, perplexed and weak,
His faltering spirit seek
In Art the solace of his toils or fears,
On all her shows are set
Marks of a mute regret,
And her most signal triumphs fraught with tears.

Then break the rebel string,
Away the chisel fling,
And hide the joyless canvas from the day !
Forego the halting line,
Silence the hint divine,
And let the spirit slumber into clay !

Patience !—the ideal form,
The landscape lustrous, warm,
The dome of Heaven's own building, rise ere long !
In Music shall be found
The plenitude of sound,
And, on these murmuring lips, joy's perfect song !

OUT OF TUNE.

SWEET little maid ! whose golden-rippled head
Betwixt my grief and me its beauty rears
With quick demand for song—all singing's dead,
My heart is sad, I cannot sing for tears .

Nay, do not ask me why : I cannot sing ;
Mine ill-tuned notes would do sweet Music
wrong ;
I have no smile to greet the laughing Spring,
No voice to join in Summer's tide of song.

More from the forest's dying splendour takes
My heart its hymn, and fuller sympathy
Finds with the hurricane November wakes
To tear its tribute from each groaning tree.

¹ Reprinted, by kind permission, from *Belgravia*.

Or when the last sere leaves in Winter fall,
While all the world in grim frost-fetters lies,
I'll envy them the snow-flakes' gentle pall
That hides their sorrows from the frowning
skies.

Were it not sweet to slumber at Earth's breast,
O'er the mad world to pull the curtain down,
Never to feel again the drear unrest
Of baffled love or unfulfilled renown—

The weariness of patient work uncrowned,
The bitter medicine of hope destroyed,
The fierce desire, the thing desired found
Void of enjoyment when at last enjoyed?

—Nay, dear, not now, not yet ! let the slow years
Fulfil their office. Oft, at close of day,
The far grim range all beautiful appears,
Kissed into kindness by the sunset ray ;

So bygone sorrow takes a tenderer hue,
So time can tinge the memory of pain :
Old songs are ever sweeter than the new,
And some day, sweet, we'll sing them all again.

TO-MORROW WE DIE.¹

“ Quid sit futurum cras, fuge quærere.”

WHENCE is it that the march of coming ill

No echo of its footfall flings before,
But steals adown the corridor, until
It pauses—at the door?

The eagle's shadow warns the huddled flock ;

The tempest sends chill breezes through the sky,
Its harbingers : on man disaster's shock
Swoops all too suddenly.

The bark, through rapids piloted with care,

Sails a smooth course forgetting dangers gone,
But strikes the hidden reef-edge unaware—
Sinks !—and the stream flows on.

¹ Reprinted, by kind permission, from the *Cornhill Magazine*.

Our world all praise, our rapture at the height,
Songs on our lip and laughter in our eye,
The thunderbolt of vengeance, fiercely bright,
Falls from serenest sky.

No sign foretells the near approach of sorrow,
No note, no breath of warning in the air ;
Still on each sweetest dream the dread to-morrow
Hath broken unaware.

Haply 'twas so ordained by wiser powers,
Who in the draught of suffering man must drain
Infused the memory of careless hours
As anodyne to pain.

Willing that each, unmindful of his knell,
Should pluck the flower, should hail the sun, and
rest
Locked a forgetful while in honied spell,
Nor perish all unblest.

Accept the proffered boon with thankful heart,
Nor listen for the tramp of troublous years ;
Remembered joy shall soothe when sorrow's smart
Turns thy sweet past to tears.

O FORTUNATOS NIMIUM !

FAIR in my eyes, beyond all scenes I know,
Is one small valley nestling in the West,
Blest with all beauty English vales can show
And breathing sweetness of the world unguessed.

Orchards are here, and fields of waving grain,
Barred to the West, where, towering o'er the
downs,
With age-long hatred on the teeming plain
Rome's grassy rampart impotently frowns.

Faint from the field where lags the harvesting
The reapers' homeward chorus takes the ear :
'Tis eventide ; the giant elm trees fling
A lengthening shadow : silence, far and near,

¹ Reprinted, by kind permission, from *London Society*.

Descends, save that the amorous cushat-dove
Tells to his mate the tale he oft hath told,
Where yon twin cedars from the silent grove
Lift their dusk heads athwart the sunset's gold.

Hushed is the busy life of bird and bee ;
The smoke steals upward through the windless air
From cottage-roofs, where round the mother's knee
Children's low voices lisp their evening prayer.

Here, far from all delight that worldlings prize,
The mart's keen strife, the pleasure-seeking throng,
Sweet Meditation weaves her phantasies
Marv'ling that toys should cheat her peace so long.

Ambition kills like frost, or mads like wine
—Less high the height attained than honour lost ;
Love's draught reveals the thirst alone divine,
Too often bitterest where we love the most :

Poor is the wealth that tempts the greed of thieves !
Wearied the strife whose bourne we cannot see !
Friends may be faithless—Nature ne'er deceives ;
Here will I stay, and let the mad world be !

A RUMINANT.

"Alas ! what boots it with incessant care
To tend the homely, slighted shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse ?
Were it not better don, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Necera's hair ?"

I CANNOT work ! my brain is tired :
Not all the maggots bred
—Or, if he pleases, thoughts inspired—
In my quaint author's head

Can rivet me : his leaves I con
In fifty different ways,
And fifty postures—'tis all one ;
The idle fancy strays.

Beats fiercely down the August glare :
The patient cab-hacks stand
Stamping, fly-tortured : faint and far
The tumult of the Strand

Floats through the window where I sit
To read Sir Thomas Browne,
And wonder why I've no more wit
Than to be left in town.

For London 's "empty" ; all are gone
Whom rank, wealth, fashion, bless :
Only the toilers linger on,
—Five millions, more or less.

And with this multitude, ignored
By beauties, dukes, and deans,
I freely mix : yet now I'm bored
Quite like a man of means.

I cannot rule my thoughts—they fly
Far from Sir Thomas Browne,
Disporting them in every sky
But that o'er London town.

I see the dainty cutter fling
The water from her bows,
Or gracefully to anchor swing
Off Oban, or at Cowes.

I see the weary sportsman turn
On northern moors to ask
The time, as stooping o'er the burn
He qualifies his flask.

Swiss lakes are blue, Swiss pines are green,
And cool the eternal snow :
Existence in the Engadine
Is pleasant now, I know.

I hear the eagle's mighty wing :
I hear the pebble fall,
Loosed by the feet that feel and cling
Along the dreadful wall.

In quiet backwaters of Thames
Breast-high the cattle wade,
And contemplate the man who dreams
Encushioned 'neath the shade.

On picnic-groups through mighty trees
I see the sunbeams peer ;
I fancy the delicious breeze
At Streatley, by the weir.

Yes, now on county cricket-grounds
The centuries are scored ;
Yes, now the untouched "service" bounds
Sharp from the shaven sward.

I like moselle-cup ; fruit this year
Affords an ample store :
And pretty girls in summer gear
Look prettier than before.

These while the leisured world enjoys,
I pace a little room
'Mid London's central heat and noise,
Dull glare or gas-lit gloom :

And patient track the rugged path
Of half-forgotten lore,
To gather that which whoso hath
Insatiate craves for more.

Bound by how perilous a hope
To what a rock of toil !
Bleak anchorage ! too brittle rope
When tempest-longings boil !

“ Dull plodder, by ambition fooled ! ”
Thus the kind world :—’twere wise,
Surely, to let my will be schooled,
Follow where they advise,

Hold platitude for holiest truth,
Take Fortune’s readier way,
Enjoy my residue of youth,
And frolic while I may.

Time was I knew full many a maid,
And worshipped whom I knew ;
With not incurious eye surveyed
Each dainty waist or shoe.

Surely not all the flowers are dead ?
Not all the spring gone by ?
June’s blossom boasts a lustier red—
At least, ’twere sweet to try :

To quit this thronged, laborious road,
And jostle of the pen ;
Shake off the rust, and make abode
Less with men's thought than men.

To till no more the unthankful ground,
And chide the fruitless year ;
Leave peering in the skies, and found
My hope, aim, pleasure, here :

With level flats of common life
Be satisfied as man ;
Shun the keen air, the upward strife,
And let them soar who can.—

—Dreamer and fool ! thy youth is past !
Once tarnished, those rich dyes
Flame not again : thy lot is cast
With grubs, not butterflies.

Vainly were all thy care addressed
One token to beguile ;
For thee no glance, no sigh repressed,
Sweet flush, responsive smile.

F

Coward ! but without the coward's plea
Of overwhelming chance ;
The safe, sure path was offered thee,
But, then, thou look'dst askance :

The valley's joyaunce, then, could'st slight,
Alluring, sheltered, warm,
Aspiring to more stern delight
And rapture of the storm :

Beholding the great summits stand
White in the starlit sky,
Thou deem'd'st it not ignobly planned
In scaling them to die.

Already half the height is won !
Behind the mountain's brow
The deepening splendour speaks the sun ;
And wilt thou waver now ?

Wilt now respect the dull world's frown,
Learn prudence in her school,
And for thy rest of life sit down
A self-deluded fool ?

Thy rest of life !—that term of breath
What if few years fulfil ?
Were 't not a nobler tale that death
Had found thee climbing still ?

If He who set thee just that task
Fastidious choice would crave,
Should at His final reckoning ask,
“ The talent, which I gave ?

“ How thou hast failed in vigilance
I know—how weakly loved,
How hated ; these might pass perchance !
But is My gift improved ?

“ I worked with cunning in thy heart ;
I framed thy separate soul
For execution of a part
In my intended whole.

“ I gave thee strength that might outlast
The inevitable pain ;
I warned thee where each snare was cast :
Now, show thy talent's gain ! ”—

—If in that hour such question came,
How might thy spirit bear
To falter, bowed to earth with shame,
“I saw ; but did not dare !”

Nay, rather eat life's bitterest bread ;
Content, though nothing please :
Repulsing with a shudd'ring dread
The popped draught of ease.

Not with thy weak repining grieved
The thinkers of old time,
When an indifferent world received
Their gift of song sublime.

He most of all, thou 'rt wont to praise
So glibly and so oft,
At such a timorous suit for bays
How would he not have scoffed !

Whose will could store the teeming brain,
And antedate the years,¹

¹ At 34 the author of some of the best poetry in the language and of the *Tractate on Education* has “not yet completed to my mind the full circle of my private studies” ; at 44 he is still content to “stand and wait.”

With hope ne'er daunted by the train
Of self-mistrusting fears ;

Not though he marked the flight of time
More jealously than thou ;
Expecting the maturer rhyme
And duly-ripened bough : ²

Not though he felt love's dear desire,
And found its objects fair :
Not when dull tasks 'gan choke the fire
And prompted to despair :

Labouring on—no stint, no pause !—
A nation's need he served ;
Champion'd a rude unlettered cause
—His higher self reserved—

Enlarging still men's narrower scope ;
Till rose the bitter wind
That left his party's sanest hope
An outcast, ruined, blind !

² Compare the sonnet *On his being arrived at the age of twenty-three*, and the opening lines of *Lycidas*.

Blind ? in the mirror of whose soul
Celestial scenes were glassed,
Hell's awful landscape burned, the whole
Stupendous drama passed !

Who saw the rebel war headlong
Down weltering Chaos driven,
While thunders of victorious song
Rolled through the vast of Heaven :

Who watched those tarnished splendours found
Their sad, relentless State ;
And heard the murky dome resound
With more than mortal hate :

'Mid Nature's utmost bounty placed
An amity how fair !
With what a sovereign mildness graced
Earth's first, untainted pair !

Not wholly lost, their halcyon hours !
Such ideal gleams as bless
Man's desert-path shine from those bowers
Of perfect loveliness.

Forfeit no more, his heritage
Returns from Persian deeps :³
Charmed for all time in MILTON's page
The happy garden sleeps !

Poet ! who did'st cast so long thy seed,
And, last, with golden pen
Did'st reap so gloriously—wast freed
From Amaryllis then ?

Not ours to sail thy magic coast,
And pluck such fruit divine :
Ours not thy fire, thy Pentecost !
What life so pure as thine ?

Yet shake we out a fearless reef ;
Yet dig some narrow plot,
And house our little harvest sheaf
Of joy that passes not.

³ Milton thus avails himself of the prevalent notion that Paradise was effaced by the Flood :

“ Then shall this Mount
Of Paradise by might of waves be moved
Out of his place, pushed by the hornèd flood,
With all his verdure spoiled, and trees adrift,
Down the great river to the opening Gulf,
And there take root, an island salt and bare,
The haunt of seals, and orcs, and seamews' clang.”

Paradise Lost ; Book xi. ll. 829—835.

Remembering how thy patience toiled
Up knowledge' weary hill,
Thy curb for passion, life unsoiled,
And hope unvanquished still :

Discerning in the stately art
That shaped thy soaring dome,
The sovereign value of a heart
'Not to be overcome.'⁴

So !—just *in statu quo* ! *my* way
To fortune, place, renown,
Lies, where an hour ago it lay,
Straight through Sir Thomas Browne.

Pardon, Physician ! you must own
Your writings are prolix.
Come ! to what 'Errors' *were* men prone
In 1646 ?

⁴ *Paradise Lost* ; i. 109.

POLYHYMNIA.

I TRACKED her shy seclusion deep
Through tangled hearts of wood ;
I climbed where, gleaming on the steep,
A moment she had stood :
From Ocean's rim I saw her peep,
And followed o'er the flood.

Vainly I searched in every place
With fond incessant care :
At night I sued her wayward grace
With unavailing prayer :
From visions haunted by her face
I woke, and she was there !

Her robe, with richest hues bedight,
Earth's every age had spun :
All beauty closed in her : the light
Rayed from her as a sun ;
And in her eyes the verities
Of spirit and sense were one.

Intoxicate I clasped her feet
With passionate speech and wild.
She checked that homage rude, unmeet,
With gesture grave ; but smiled
A pity so divinely sweet,
It hushed me like a child.

She spoke, and in her accents thrilled
Youth's passionate hopes and fears,
Love's madness, longings unfulfilled,
The sense of mortal tears :
Shook underneath—an organ breath—
The wisdom of the years.

“ High o'er the pines 'mid ice and snow
I have a silent home ;
The grassy woodland dells I know
Where the first blue-bells come ;
And far and wide the blast I ride
That whips the seas to foam.

“ I seat me in the flaming West
As on a burnished throne ;
Dawn's opal tints on mountain-crest
Confess their sheen mine own ;
Whatever light is loveliest
I wear it as my crown.

“ Vast growths that spread 'neath tropic rays,
Dread splendours of the Pole,
The wandering fires through space that blaze,
The subject orbs that roll,
—All Nature's life with me is rife ;
I animate the whole.

“ And from my palace-halls apart
I stretch my wide domain
Wherever leaps a joyous heart,
Or sad one drags its chain ;
O'er maddening fevers of the mart,
And mysteries of pain.

“ My voice is in the soldier's ears
To prompt each gallant blow :
My tones the patriot statesman hears
And dares the doubtful throw :
Swell from no sorrow such wild tears
But I can stint their flow.

“ I lighten through the dark'ning past,
Renewing life I gave :
The Future's horror I forecast,
The heroes that shall save :
And words I utter now shall last
When these have found their grave.

“Where man his fellow’s suffering saw,
And blessing followed ruth,—
Where knowledge schools herself by awe
And wisdom teaches youth
To feel no conflict ’twixt the law
Of Beauty and of Truth ;—

“If any rein the base desire
With curb of purer creed ;
If but one lovely soul aspire
To bright, unselfish deed ;
If God’s meek labourer yet find hire,
Casting his patient seed:—

“All these are mine : for I can pass
Subtler than subtlest wind ;
A force to move the dullest mass,
A spirit more swift than mind ;
With all that shall be, is, or was,
Inextricably twined.

“I hear the sounds of Earth ascend,
Her toil, her mirth, her wrong ;
I mark whereto her motions tend,
I muse and listen long,
Till all her mighty murmur blend
Into one perfect song.

“ And with this freight, on pinion fleet
I pass to that abode
Where never any mortal feet
The hallowed precinct rod
And offer it, an incense sweet,
Before the throne of God.

“ But thou, whose service owns the fear
Lest thou should'st serve in vain,
Take comfort ! 'tis the withering year
Secretes the future's grain :
Spring shall awake the landscape sere
To leaf and bloom again.

“ Make clean thine inmost heart—forget
The pagan years of shame :
Conquer the million's sordid fret ;
Care not for passing fame :
Fruit ! from God's spark within, ere yet
Drawn thither whence it came !

“ Thou lovest me ?—with steadfast will
Follow ! with sleepless mind,
And heart that ponders to fulfil
Some kindness to thy kind,
Unowned, derided—up the hill !
Who follows me shall find.”

Fell silence—such as, mellow, mild,
When the rich notes are dead,
Bespeaks to ears they have beguiled
A heavenly presence fled :
And over slumbering woods the wild
November dawn was red.

SENEX SENI.

RISES a dream of other days
From silent depths of time !
Old memories stir about our hearts
The laughter of the prime :
We cannot joy as once we joyed
—That gaiety is flown ;
Yet I'll be sworn no breast this morn
Beats warmer than our own.

The ancient hearty wish I send,
Dear wag of days gone by !
Your health, sir ! may you never feel
Your winters more than I !
Send me one thought, as round the fire
Your Yule-tide tales are told :
True friendship fears no change of years ;
Kind hearts are never old.

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

LAY him to rest
With gentle hand ; and spite of every tear
That dewed his path, each sigh that stirred the
 breast,
 Say he was kind. More near
By one long night-watch climbs the coming sun ;
And though this, too, was weary, chide not—it is
 done !

We stand at gaze,
Presaging vaguely of our destinies ;
Like traveller of Eastern tale, who stays
 To listen, while a breeze
O'er the dim borders of some magic land
Comes laden with strange sounds he cannot under-
 stand.

But this we know:

If from our vanished past we garnered aught
Of power to warm the heart to kindlier glow,

Or fire with nobler thought,

This shall be light to cheer our gloomiest hours
And kindle all the waste with smile of fadeless flowers

ALBERTUS VICTOR, PRINCEPS:

OBIIT JAN. 14TH, A.D. 1892, ÆT. SU. 29.

GONE! like the moment's bubble on the stream,
Or snatch of glorious music from the strings!
At youth's full height, its fair imaginings
Made fairer yet by love's enchanted dream,
When none could picture such untoward extreme,
The air is darkened as by sudden wings,
And Death restricts the promise of our kings!
But now, their talk had wedding-care for theme;
And ours, with loyal fervours all aglow:
To-day, *one* spirit lies crushed; his House are fain
To hide in their imperial mantle's fold
A tongueless sorrow; while, repeated slow,
Across this mighty heart and seething brain
Of England, hark! an iron voice strikes cold.

London, Jan. 14th, 1892.

ON CLARKSON STANFIELD'S PICTURE

"THE ABANDONED."

Lo ! she, whose lordly strength of late withstood
Victorious the worst rage of storms that blow,
Dismasted, water-logged, and helmless now,
Heaves at the mercy of the weltering flood.
But tyrant Ocean takes a kindlier mood,
Scorning the triumph o'er an humbled foe ;
And skies compassionate of her state brought low
Bid round her path celestial splendours brood.

Emblem of spirits o'er whose career of pride
Has swept some tempest of calamity
Leaving them will-bereft, by rude blasts driven ;
Yet round whose wandering steps, though fools deride,
Lighten soft gleams of new-found sympathy :
—Mocked, humbled, helpless, ay ! but nearer Heaven.

WRONGED.

No change, nor any faintest hope of change !
Dawn follows dawn, successive sunsets flame
Unheeded o'er the woodlands, since he came
To make the silent solitary grange
Dishonour's tomb—and still he can but range
In thought o'er one dark drama, can but frame
His lips to repetition of one name
Unworthy his great love ; nor deems it strange
To writhe for ever 'neath the uplifted rod,
But stunned, half-conscious, trails his wounded life ;
Till pierces home the sense of bliss destroyed,
And filled with wild rebellion against God,
Mankind, himself, he takes the murderous knife,
And casts his o'ercharged spirit on the void.

IN MEMORIAM

W. H.

OB. OCT. 1ST, 1889.

NAY, enter ! enter ! thou shalt hear no more
The cheery voice that often gave thee hail.
The house lies hushed : for, wonderingly and pale,
A stranger on the far-off misty shore
Its master wanders now—while men deplore
The generous hand, the front that would not quail
In civil storm, the just impartial scale,
And life that left to slanderous tongues no door.

These the world knew :—but not the selfless mind
Plotting for others, the nice reference had
To feeling, ripe advice that soundest proved,
Untalked-of toils, and kinship more than kind :
These, too, the world must estimate, and add
That whom it praised, respected, feared—we loved !

AN EPITHALAMIUM.

“We will walk this world,
Yoked in all exercise of noble end,
And so thro’ those dark gates across the wild
That no man knows.”

AN EPITHALAMIUM.

ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16TH, 1886,

R. S. D. to K. E. B.

I.

NOT often, ah ! not often in these days,
Dark 'neath the shade of strife's unlovely reign,
And vexed by yet remembered pain
My spirit cares to raise
Its ancient song—to weave the rhythmic line,
Forging the fiery numbers in its glow,
Or following smooth the lyric's tranquil flow,
Delight that once was mine !
Nor is there welcome now
From spirits foolish grown, or hard,

Save to the verse that beautifies the wrong,
Tricking the pleasant vice in song,
Or, lost in labyrinths of unmeaning sound,
Wreathing fantastic curves, like swallows, near the
ground ;
O Poesy far-wandered since the bard
Wept those sweet tears o'er the untimely hearse
Of Lycidas, or dared to trace,
Braving our dulness with his trumpet-verse,
The vengeance of an angel-race !
Since the high-priest of Nature's inmost shrine,
Who bade new beauty burst from wave and cloud,
Lifting with feverish hand Hyperion's shroud,
Poured to Italian skies a grief divine ;
Since Harold's thunder told a Titan's pain,
Or Wordsworth heavenwards flamed in faith's
immortal strain !

Yet if the gentler theme which shared
Spenser's sweet harp with allegoric mood,
And charmed those depths of horror-haunted wood,
Where hapless Virtues fared,
To echo wedding-bells,—if yet
Such theme may teach me to forget
Griefs of the past or fears the future brings,
My hand shall wake once more the unfingered strings.

Not always Pain's dark ministers have power :
Her dusk wing spreads ! she hath outwept her hour !
Deep in the heart hope's seedling buds and springs,
And thrusts the bitter by, and climbs to better things.

II.

Low in the West

Nestles a valley, narrowing from the plain,
Where orchards are, and kine, and waving grain ;
And there, 'mongst all its flowers the loveliest,
Dwelt 'neath her father's roof
A maid, on whom for proof
And seal of worth the general love did rest
In that content wherewith the westering sun
Broods o'er hushed woodlands ere his course be
done.

Nor long the tale—of many lovers one
Claimed sweet surrender from her virgin pride,
Of that too-early scattered band
By friendship joined, as hand in hand
We tracked the Elysian fields of shadowy lore,
Or joyous through the gleaming rivertide
Flashed on keen oars, or drave the flying ball

O'er the smooth sward, or feasting in the hall
Fetched the deep chorus back from roof to floor.

III.

Promised joy is not possessed ;
Love must answer trouble's test
Ere its mintage sterling be approved :
Grudge not to them, whose caution nice
Lays at love's feet no sacrifice,
Their dole of petty bliss—they have not loved.
Down the old world-song since Time's flight begun
Echoes but one refrain :
Careless we take the prize no conflict won ;
Fine flour from winnowed grain ;
Toil before resting ; after tempest, sun ;
And happiness through pain.
Spoils of good from evil torn,
Strength of disappointment born,
Fortune on triumphant wheels
Following hard at failure's heels,
Fair faces lacking beauty's complement
Till chastening grief diviner grace hath lent.
One the law for all decreed,
Nor may these exemption plead :

Threatenings of a storm are rife
Love and duty seem at strife :
Though one faith unite the pair
Doubt and difference are there,
And love is lost awhile in question grave.

Ah me ! how oft man's brightest hope
Bids him in darkness grope,
Disputing his salvation's power to save !
Too long we frame a Moloch from a creed !
Too cruelly the victims bleed !
Too much we ask of failing clay ;
And fashion to a scourge the faith God gave for stay.
Dim mysteries we contemplate
With darkened eyes, and cannot wait
The tracing of God's finger ;
But make our blindness reason's cage,
While fruitlessly we linger
O'er readings of a yet unmastered page :
And dream, poor fools ! that thus we serve Him best
Whose working, essence, and supreme behest,
Is naught but love ;
Who bids the trackless comets wheel
Obedient to one centre, though each groove
Lie countless leagues apart—yet deigns to prove,
Even though He smile, how can He feel !

For narrowness ; and on the tortured heart,
Where faith has turned love's shaft to poisoned
 dart,
Sheds some soft opiate for its misery,
Or summons where dim eyes may drop their scales,
 and see.

Not so with these.
Sweet charity cries out upon the sterner law,
 Acknowledging no flaw,
—Mercy, not sacrifice, her creed—nor sees
Barrier 'twixt hearts that one pure flame has joined :
And mild forbearance, and their love confessed,
 Accomplishes the rest ;
Parental care no wrong will find,
But bids them both before God's altar stand
In prayerful trust, and leave it hand in hand.

IV.

Swiftly the summer flies for those who love,
Changing sweet whisperings by field and grove :
 Reddens the copse beneath the hill,
 Falls November damp and chill.

Ruthlessly the lightning stroke
Smites the sapling as the oak.
Ere the last sere leaves are shed
Sickness rears her loathly head ;
Sentence of unkindly fate
Bids the lovers separate ;
Sigh and clinging kiss are vain,
He must seek the Southern main,
And drink from breeze and wave his manhood's
strength again.

V.¹

Wearily, wearily,
Waiteth his well-beloved when he is gone.
Pales her fair cheek with fears she fain would hide:
The laggard months she will not chide,
That cheat her of the tender touch and tone,
And pass so barrenly ;
But, unforgetful, through the village fares,
Tarrying at each cottage door,
Sweetly responsive as of yore

¹ This and the following Strophe (No. vi.) appeared together under the title 'Absent' in the author's former volume—"The Immortals, and other Poems."

To the long tale outpoured of others' cares.
But in the house at eventide, alone,

Her finger wistfully

Tracks on the chart the perilous leagues of sea ;

And shudd'ring at the winter's flaw without,

She pictures horrors in the tropic zone—

The dead calm broken by the swift cyclone,

The staggering plunge, the seamen's shout,

The wave-swept deck,

The helpless wreck,

And faces heaving white beneath the moon !

—In such dark broodings sitting, anguish-tost,

Till isle and cape and continent are lost

In blinding mist, as sinks the fair brown head,

And the hot tears fall fast upon the page.

VI.

Is there no sense

Whereby two souls conjunct in sympathy

May mingle, o'er the roaring waste of sea,

In conference ?

Breathe no celestial airs that grace may lend
Our grosser limitation to suspend,
And bid us bridge the vast unmeasured space
With love's embrace ?

Gleams there no glass in heaven's o'erarching blue
Where thought may follow thought, and understand,
As when from eye to eyes the message flew,
And hand pressed hand ?

Wandering drear, a yet unwelcomed guest,
On Fancy's twilight borders—must the heart
Still follow her imaginings apart,
Finding no rest ?

Must the drawn sigh be cast on idle wind ?
The midnight weepings, the dishevelled hair,
Bowed knees and fingers clasped in passionate prayer,
No answer find ?

Against our prison-bars of flesh without
Vainly we beat, and fall the fruitless tear,
Till spirit soar from sense refined and clear,
We rest in doubt.

VII.

Proudly his vessel plumes her snowy wings
Like swallow for the summer of the South.
 Fade the white cliffs: the good ship swings
 Steadily past Calpe's mouth,
Past the sweet haunts of the Hesperides,
Past the white finger of the pointing Peak
That heaves its frost above the sweltering haze ;
 And plunging o'er the blazing Line
Rounds the far Cape which Gama's galleon turned
In that bright century of bold design
When Grecian fire in Western spirits burned,
And mind with mass victoriously wrought
Till widened knowledge met the wakened thought :
Onwards ! through shimmer of the dazzling seas,
'Mid airs of spice and heavy fragrance brought
From Madagascar forests on the breeze,
She cleaves the pearly deep's untrodden ways
Unresting, till the anchor rattling out
Drops in the breathless calm of Indian bays.

H

VIII.

Nor long he lingers in that magic land
Where flaunts the glowing peacock, and the palm
Springs skywards : with each mountain-wave
His vessel climbed, the sea-breath gave
New life, and brake disease' insidious charm.
And now he little recks of India's store
But chides the enforced delay
That holds him from his native shore
The addition of a day.
Poor the delight we taste alone, nor share
Our joy in Art's or Nature's offering,
Unmindful how community can fling
Lustre that limns the landscape twice as rare.
He, most of all, who loves
Heedless of beauty roves,
And at no shrine of loveliness will bend
Peerless howe'er ;
Though all the world commend
'Tis worthless, since his mistress is not there.
Careless he traverses each fairy town :
The carven gates, the shadowy streets,
The blaze of sunrise, thrown

Sudden on gleaming mosque and feathery palm,
 Pass by him like a dream :
Dreamwise he walks in palaces that line
Their courts with fire of gems that idly shine ;
Dreamwise he wanders where the lordly stream
 Of sacred Ganges flows ;
Unnoted through dark aisles of forest gleam
 Himâla's distant snows :
The boon luxuriance of the bursting brake
 On whose infected odorous breath
 Loiters the viewless wasting death ;
The glittering eyeball of the watching snake ;
The fierce cat creeping cautious through the cane,
 A gorgeous terror—all are vain !
His heart is elsewhere ; nor knows content
Till, from the surge, in narrow confines pent,
He marks the sinking coast. His vessel's track,
 Entering Perim's rocky gate,
Is lucent on the Erythræan wave,
Heaving betwixt the land which bears the date
 And yonder flaming shore that fate
Has destined for so many a hero's grave :
 Thence creeping slow through Suez' strait
 She speeds across the tideless lake ;
 Feels the Atlantic buffets break

Once more ; and, spreading swiftest wings
For English shores, the impatient lover brings
To his heart's anchorage. Ah ! what caress
So sweet in solace as the kiss that bears
The assurance of return ? what happiness
Rivals the heaven of trust we reach through tears ?

IX.

Now the full Spring is bloom—the bitter East
Lulls his complaining on the young May's breast :
 The barren wrinkled earth,
By soft descent of amorous showers caressed,
Smiles into blossom over hedge and garth :
The brooks have broken from their icy bound—
 Far off the sound
Of their old lover's voice, the passionate sea,
Comes to them, and they follow o'er the lea,
Impatient till his wild arms fold them round :
In every covert shade the finches pair,
And frame from withered halms the new life's nest :
 Love triumphs everywhere,
Chanting o'er earth and sea his madrigal :
And Nature, hearing, decks the youthful year

In wedding-robe ; and lovers list his call
And hasten with due feet to join his festival.

X.

The day has come ;
And earth and sky and all things seem address,
At Nature's high behest,
To grace this function of her primal law.

The sun has taken post on high,
As who may best espy
Lest influence untoward or smallest flaw
Mar the fulfilment of love's mystery.

Far and wide
The country-side
With a vague hint of happiness is stirred :
The trees have donned at length their summer
pride,
And every brake is loud with voice of bird

Carolling joyously :
— ' Keen was Winter's breath,' they say,
' Summer's come at last to stay ;
What though trouble sorely tried,
Bitterness may not abide.

Love is sweet
When lovers meet,
Woody and wooer, youth and maid,
Meet and mingle kisses 'neath the shade ;
Sweeter when the wooing's done
And two longing hearts are one ;'—
Thus, the woven boughs among,
Throbs each satin throat with song ;
Till travellers, loitering on their noontide way,
Muse what deep joy it is that thrills the woods to-day.

XI.

Meanwhile by croft and cot and scented lane
The hamlet hears the summons peal,
And gathers to the ivied fane.
The goodwife quits her household care,
The goodman spares the billowy hay
To wave in idleness another day :
One and all to church repair,
Hard-handed labourer and tottering crone,
And childhood's ruddy growth, and beauty scarce yet
blown.

Up the moss-grown steps they pass,
And underneath the yews ;
And old folk mark the breaking grass
Over the late-filled grave, and muse,
Silent, the mystery of Life
 And Fate's uncertain wheel.
But deeper silence sinks on lips and heart
 As rev'rently they kneel
Where the stray sunbeam flings its quivering dart
 Amid the waving strife
Of orchard boughs, whose flickering shadows fall
Softly on time-worn floor and dim memorial.

Who walk not 'mid the throng of hurrying feet,
 Behold Faith's vision sweet :
Theirs not the questioning, the dim surmise,
 The coldness of the wise :
No discord rings along the eternal lays,
 No earth-cloud veils the gaze,
For childlike hearts, where lingers uneffaced
 The writing God hath traced.

XII.

Into that peace

Entering, they two have passed
On to the altar-steps, whose hands at last
Indissolubly linked in marriage bands
Must on this day affirm their heart's long choice.
Girt by her maiden group the maiden stands
With downcast eyes, a dream of floating white,
Pure as the single moonbeam swept by night
O'er ocean foam, or windy wreath of snow
Fringing with fantasy the fearful brow
Of the sheer cliff where never foot hath trod :

And by her side

He waits who wills her for his bride ;
What time from organ and uplifted voice
Peals the sweet anthem to the changeless God,
Who was before the mountains and the sea,
And metes man's breath from His eternity ;
So may the Guardian of their early ways
Be present with them still. 'Mid prayer and praise
The holy rite proceeds till all is done,
And from the church's shade they issue, one :

A single life, whate'er the future hath,
Stored in its dark recess, of weal or woe ;
Whether by pleasant meads on fortune's path
 Their flower-strewn footsteps go,
Made glad with sun and childhood's utterance
 sweet ;
Or 'mid rough stones adown the gloomy vale
 Stumbling on weary feet,
They water the bleak wilderness with tears,
And bide with hearts unchanged through patient
 years
 The threshing of God's flail.

XIII.

And as they pass the sacred threshold o'er
 Tarry we here a moment's space,
Nor join the merry marriage-feast awhile
 But lingering in the empty aisle,
Invoke once more the Everlasting grace
To guard from storms their bark new-loosed from
 shore.

Theirs be the changeless love that finds new scope
 In sorrow-darkened years ;
Theirs the forgiveness swift, the unswerving hope,
 The charity that dares ;
Breadth that to narrow custom will not bow,
 But breaks its brittle clay ;
The calm united front, the unruffled brow
 That holds the world at bay ;
Steadfast as hills whose summits, wrapt in snow,
Reck not of blasts that break their pines below,
 And stainless even as they :
And, chiefly, she !—for foolishly they deem,
And witless all of woman, who confine
The wife to echo faint her husband's theme,
Or spend herself on toys, or, haply, pine
In mute neglected patience, while he soars :
Blind ! not considering her queenly art
And large prerogative, who, in man's heart
Throned incontestably, was dowered by heaven
With gifts proportionate to that empire given ;
Whose nature, ineffectual apart,
And lacking in consistence, linked with his
May scale undreamed-of possibilities ;
Whose is the rarer glimpse, the nobler dream,
The swift intuitive flash, the happy scheme

Unlaboured ; whose, across his deeds to fling
The lustre of unselfishness, to bring
Ethereal hope to fire his doubting soul,
And, while she seem subservient, to control ;
Able by soft persuasive force to mould
His spirit, fused with hers, to finest gold.
Ay ! hers this chemic skill, this potent art,
And wider kingdom—if she know her part.

XIV.

Oh, thou, the world's sole sovereign, wife or girl !
Wielding unchallenged thine imperial sway !
Whose fancy walks in palaces of pearl,
Whose form is as a winged dream meshed in clay,
Of whom all tenderest things—the breaking day,
Spring flowers, the evening's sigh—are eloquent ;
Goddess ! at whose bright feet the ages lay
Their endless offering—wherefore art thou bent
To rear so oft in wreck thy magic's monument ?

Calm dwells thy spirit where no cloud of care
Waves its tempestuous wings : that better part
Of knowledge, which man gropes for in despair,
Is born to flower instinctive in thy heart.

At thy soul's door he prays thee to impart
Shelter from blasts that desolate his own :
Thou heedest not his knocking ; but apart,
Guarding those chambers sweet with gates of stone,
Thou laugh'st, and leavest him to journey on alone.

Long since he knows thee queen—thy finer sense,
Touch, tone, and thought, he feels them every one,
And mutely abdicates his poor pretence
Of sovereignty, and prays, toil's heavy son,
To drag himself, outwearied and foredone
With conflict, to the sunshine of thine eye
And taste some drops of comfort :—hast thou none,
No draught to cool his parchèd lips and dry
Save mocking feint of love, light words, and vanity ?

To thee his dull encumbered spirit pays
Homage that lives when other worship dies :
Thine is the appointed task from dust to raise
His soul, once more beholding through thine eyes
The face of God, grown dim by mists that rise
And mantle o'er his reason's stagnant pool.
Thou ! whom he rates past wisdom of the wise
And holds thy lightest word his golden rule,
Oh ! is he nothing worth but to be made thy fool ?

Must for thy sport his worser nature be
Enticed, his aspiration sneered away,
Till heaven's last spark be quenched utterly,
And triumphing thou spurn'st his soulless clay
For newer spoils? Can'st find no nobler way,
No queenlier wreath of victory than this?
Destined for man's salvation, must no day
Set, save on some dark scene of wasted bliss,
No hour of thy soft ease its wonted victim miss?

And, whiles thou dalliest, stays the age of gold;
Tarries the immortal race from thee to spring.
Oh, rouse thee! death's long empire is waxed old,
And trembling waits that young reign's blossoming.
Awake! with expectation of its king
Thrills the impatient earth from sea to sea!
The stars have ceased their music, listening
Till the grand chant roll skywards! wake! and be
Thyself, and bid man know his Heaven attained in
thee!

XV.

Too grave the strain,
Too bitter, haply, for a bridal lay:
Yet what the o'ercharged spirit may not contain

That must the swift tongue say.
Blame not the minstrel, if amidst the gay
 Blooms of the marriage-wreath he twine
Stray leaves of cypress ; so their hues may shine
By contrast bright, and sweetness spring from pain.
If they whose spousal-joys he doth rehearse
Deign to accept his lowly-offered verse,
 Nor chide the varying mood
Of love's untutored utterance and rude,
Knowing the constant heart that husk doth hide,
He cares not who condone, or carp, or cast aside.

XVI.

Wit and laughter, wine and flowers,
Meeter these for wedding-hours !
And crowned with these the unheeded moments fly ;
 So airy-light,
 Their essence bright
 Defies the word
 That would record ;
Like fairest things that fade and leave no print,
 The dew, the foam, the rainbow-tint
Or white fleece melting into summer sky :—
 Till round the rose-twined porch we crowd

To wish them for the last time happiness
As forth they pass, the bridegroom with his bride ;
 And both are happy, both are proud ;
 But mingling with her pride
Her eyes suffused a gentle pain confess,
 And half she wills to stay ;
And waits a mother's clasp, a father's blessing,
And words to be remembered many a day,
 And stays for yet a fresh caressing ;
 Till even the last farewell is said ;
 By wonted shower of white grain sped
 The carriage rolls away,
And they are gone—to wander in their bliss,
That glory o'er man's desert-pathway thrown ;
—A single jewel spared him from the abyss
 That sucked his riches down ;
—Stray blossom the Immortals shall not miss,
 Fallen from Heaven's full crown ;
—Glimpse through an open portal, whence
Celestial joys may pierce his sense,
And make him crave Omnipotence
 His load of cares to drown,
 His heavy cares, his bitter woes,
For ever in this Lethè of repose ;
—Sweetness that whispers him of morning hours

Long vanished, when his earth was blithe and young,
And round his happy feet the mirth of flowers

Unbidden sprung,

What time beneath the groves of Paradise

He wandered free, or rapt in gazing hung

On his boon partner's eyes,

While from the blazing choir in watching skies

Such music broke as hath not since been sung ;

Ere yet by fate's unpitying hand was rung

Of innocence and human joys the knell,

And sorrow, at that sound, her shadow flung

Even o'er celestial courts, while rose in hell

'Midst the dark host of unrelenting powers

Triumph, on Eden's bloom a sickening fell,

And a long shudder swept her heavenly-planted
bowers :

—In such bliss gone to wander, heedless where !

By the sweet River's legendary wave

That rolls, 'neath castled steep and slopes of vine,

Its tide of secrets seawards from the shrine,

The far white palace of its foaming birth ;

Where the ice-armoured Maids in phalanx grave,

High o'er the stir and soil of our dim earth,

Uplift their virgin brows for heaven to kiss.

XVII.

Yes, they are gone ! and we who love them both
Linger about the doorway, loth
To break the charm that hovers o'er us all :
And though we cheat the waning day
With pastime, sociably gay,
Yet must some little tinge of sadness fall.
The guests drop from us, one by one ;
The house resumes its old tranquillity ;
And the home-circle, left alone,
Takes up its round of duty thoughtfully ;
Pondering, some,
Remembered spousals of a bygone day ;
Others, whose locks confess no grey,
Forecasting those to come ;
But each and all
—From Youth's sweet dreaming spring to that last
stage
Where mellow thoughts of Age
The bounty of the summer suns recall—
Made happier by the union of these twain !
For marriage-torch was never kindled yet
Without some lightening of regret,

Some fresher hope, some lessening fear,
Some dawn of comfort, softening tear,
And ampler boon than any private gain

That wedded hearts can prove ;
Seeing that all men's present fate,
All blessing they anticipate,
All memories shrined inviolate,
Are linked with Love ;

—Love, the great Husbandman of human life,
Whose sowing and whose harvesting are one ;
Who works invisibly till the surprise

Of consummation gladdens heart and eyes,
Leading the young and trembling feet
By ways so witching sweet

They reckon not what far journey is begun ;

—Who, if he use the severing knife,
Teaches the orphaned trunk to borrow
An anodyne for sorrow

From the slip's golden fruitage, in its fair young leaf
Find remedy for grief ;

—Whose tender fostering care

May boast of many pleasaunce fair

Drought would have parched, or tempest's fury
hurled

To ruin waste and bare ;

—Winning its fragrance from the delicate bloom,
Giving the strong large room,
And scattering broad his seed of kindness through
the world.

EPILOGUE

TO THE PRECEDING POEM.

THUS, happy in the sense of lifted care
That follows on a happy wedding-tide,
 And, it may be, discerning there
A larger joy than raptured lovers feel,
A symbol of the universal weal,
A prophecy of happiness more wide,
The minstrel touched his harp-strings—whose own
 ear
Strains for no sound of distant wedding-peal,
To other music dedicate ; whose hand
 Long since, as doubtingly he paced
 A trackless dreary waste,
Was taken by a Figure, calm and grand,
That sweetly smiled and pointed to a height,
 A momentary blaze of white

Shown brief through rifts of storm, and bade him
climb :

Who thenceforth dreams no more of hearth or bride,
Nor broods o'er weaknesses of former time ;
All the mistakes, the failure, and the sin,
The accumulated bitterness of wrong,

 Puts utterly aside ;

Leaving the world—its meanness and its strife,
Its tenderness, its opening rose of life—
To follow the steep paths of thought and song :

 Whose long-sealed vision doth begin
To draw some thread of purpose from the years'
Entangled skein, discerning through the dark
Rays of forgotten hope, a far-off spark
That slowly brightens, as o'er dusky meres
The parting mist unfolds the morning star :

 Whose eager listening takes from far
Deep voices pealing on the eternal shore
Their olden chant, but sweeter than before ;
Hears in the sea-song meaning, on the breeze
A note of prescient warning pass ; who sees
A gesture in the sunset ; whom the night
Calls with its multitude of systems bright ;
For whom the imperial robe of Autumn, flung
Resplendent o'er the forests, hath a tongue

That prophesies of falsehood feeble grown,
Of sophistry's strong tyranny o'erthrown,
Dissonance closed in one harmonious chord,
Joys unimagined given, or old restored :
Reading in Nature's fair, untainted face
The pledge, the presage, of that glorious race
The tramp of whose triumphant march he hears
Down the dim corridors of the unborn years :
—Race of the faultless shape; the flawless brain,
The hand that fails not ; conscience that no stain
Has clouded ; heart that sorrow never wrung,
Yet master of life's secret ; balanced nerve,
And calm resistless will that cannot swerve ;
Last issue of mankind, from wedlock sprung
With one whose bridal claims no humble lay
That celebrates a single wedding-day
With selfish joy, but calls on depth and height
To echo to a limitless delight,
To swell the pæan of Heaven and Earth made one,
Of Thought and Act at last in unison.

Not yet we hail that dawning ; still we fear,
And doubt, and yearn, and travail ; still we hear
The vain philosopher his systems build ;

Still hope is foiled, and purpose unfulfilled ;
Still the bold plea for Right mistaken seems ;
Still sighs the priest, and yet the poet dreams ;
Groping in darkness, seeking on each hand
Some light, some voice that we can understand,
 To illuminate our action :
Till blows the wind from God, and sweeps away
Our sloth, hate, lust—all causes that delay
 The longed-for satisfaction ;
Till man's enfranchised spirit shall cast aside
His brief ephemeral loves, and, satisfied
With counterfeit no longer, shall espouse
One bride, alone deemed worthy of his vows.

She sits afar, Time's lonely hills upon,
And claims the whole world's homage as her due ;
Majestic in her form, but heavenly ruth
Beams in her eyes, and makes that aspect sweet
Which else might seem forbidding ; round her feet
Rolls the massed thunder, and her name is Truth.
And he who thinks to wed with her must sue
Long time, and look for her sweet self alone.
Silent she sits upon her mountain-throne

Musing, and in her hair the free winds play :
And they who win her lofty seat are few ;
Their footsteps totter, and their locks are grey,
And faces tear-stained : other few essay
The bold ascent, but doubting of their way,
Or wearied with long toiling, or afraid,
Pause on the steep and let their ardour die :
While, far below, the rude world, hurrying by
In tumult, heeds her not, but hastes to lay
Rich gifts before her rivals—pleasure, power,
Fame, riches, rank—and changes with each hour
Its fashion of insensate homage paid,
While vows and cursings to her ear are borne.
And oftentimes she smiles in lofty scorn,
But, oftener, a mist of pitying tears
Dims the dark lustre of those patient eyes.
And sitting thus throughout the rolling years
She broods, but not for ever—time shall be
That Truth shall rouse her from her reverie,
Shall leave her home of cloud, assert her claim,
And cloak no more her majesty in shame ;
With armed front and battle-flag unfurled
Descending to the conquest of the world.

She comes ! she comes ! before her glorious feet
Roll the dark hosts of Error in retreat :
Fails of its sceptre each accursèd power ;
Sullen they yield and recognize their hour.
No more shall Right by tale of Wrong be known,
Nor dulled her visage in a darkened glass ;
No more through bitterness shall good men pass
To vindication and the hero's throne ;
Honour no more shall fear the gilded lie,
Trust shall no more be sapped by treachery,
Nor longer virtue's winsome beauty fade
Lacking the rites at meaner altars paid.
Truth's clarion, henceforth without faltering blown,
Conquers all utterance else and rings alone,
Tossed like the thunder's voice from hill to hill,
Bidding the far coasts hearken and be still.
And though awhile man tremble, she shall fill
His heart with her sole image : love's mild yoke
Shall lead his terror bound, and make him bold
To worship,—woo her, till his clasp enfold
Her very self, and lo ! where thunders broke,
Her own sweet lineaments unclouded shine,
And shame his purblind eyes that knew her not
divine.

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But while she broods upon her lonely height
Darkling they wander who her followers be,
And count the weary watches of the night,
And muse the meaning of her mystery
Waiting the dawn.

THE END.

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"But when he spoke
—Oh! not with this rude utterance!—an unknown
And peerless harmony the silence broke,
Whose sweetness might disown
The far-off cadence of the summer seas
That chant at eve a burthen fraught with memories."

Again, at Shakespeare's uprising with intent to express his broad and sympathetic views of human conduct and interest, there was a thrill of spontaneous enthusiasm:—

"And far in heaven, methought a delicate rose
Flushed o'er the listening heights, and thrilled their conscious snows."
. . . The poem is good, both in conception and execution, and its promise is perhaps of more import than its performance."—*Daily Chronicle*, Feb. 18th, 1891.

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